Prior experiences of library usage of the new entrants: with special reference to Bachelor of Arts undergraduates, University of Peradeniya

Pradeepa Wijetunge
Librarian,
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
librarian@lib.cmb.ac.lk

B.N.G.S. Premarathne
Senior Assistant Librarian
Dental Sciences Library,
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
sp12386@gmail.com

Abstract

This study was conducted among the undergraduates of Bachelors of Arts new entrants 2015 of the University of Peradeniya. Objectives of this study were to study the prior experiences of using the school library, to find the reasons for not using the school library, to inquire into the sources of information they used, to find out the experience of information seeking skills on new entrants andto identify the barriers to use the Main Library, University of Peradeniya. Methodology used in this study was a survey research design and the survey strategy was carried out in January 2015. Total number of 706 new entrants of the Bachelor of Arts who were registered at the Main Library voluntarily participated in this survey. A questionnaire was administered to a targeted group to gather information on library usage. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical method and SPSS. The study findings indicated that the majority of the new entrants have used and obtained the experiences of using the library and 89% students have borrowed books, 78% students have used the library for studying purposes. The findings highlight that the teachers have instructed the students how to use the library. The study revealed that the new entrants of the Bachelors of Arts of University of Peradeniya have basic skills of library use. There is a need to create an awareness of the new library technologies and services to new entrants. User education is the important role for these new entrants and it must be incorporated into the curriculum of the first year to final year syllabuses.

Keywords: Undergraduates, School Library Usage, Information Seeking Skills

1.0 Introduction

Library as an information resource center make available a wide variety of information resources for the users. It is generally agreed that library is indeed beneficial for the students to achieve their educational goals. This study was conducted among the undergraduates of Bachelors of Arts new entrants 2015 of the University of Peradeniya to know the extent and nature to which they were aware of using the library before entered the University and also to offer an overview of students' usage pattern of the library. In order to establish whether the new entrants to the university have adequate experience in using a school library a survey was conducted at the University of Peradeniya in 2015.

Bikos (2014) revealed by research that school libraries occupy a significant position in discussions on learning and manyinternational studies have asserted the positive role school libraries have exerted on education, linking them directly to the improvement of students' academic performance, and insecondary education. According to the research conducted by Mizrachi (2010) most of the students interviewed in this study (30 out of 41), reported having used the library and /or library sources in some manner to fulfill their academic tasks. Adekeye (1997) described that e much has been written on the importance of user education in libraries, but most writers have concentrated on the more advanced and better organized academic, public and special libraries, thus neglecting school libraries which are the first library contact students have before graduating into adult life. In the study carried out by Jiao (1997) although he has identified some characteristics of students who use the library frequently, as well as their reasons for using the library, he says much more research is needed in this area. In particular, it is important to find out how long students typically stay in the library, as well as the library activities in which students spend most of the time In addition, it is necessary to determine which areas, equipment, and services are used most frequently by students. The above study is carried out to find the overall identification on library usage by new entrants before entering the University.

2.0 The Objectives of the Study

• To study the prior experiences of using the school library.

• To find the reasons for not using the school library (if they do not use the school library).

• To inquire into the sources of information they used, other than the school library, to obtain study-related information.

3.0 Methodology

A two page structured questionnaire was distributed to all the new entrants to the Faculty of Arts at the point of registration in the library. There were 1066 Bachelor of Arts students registered at the Faculty of Arts. Out of this number 706 new entrants who have registered at the Main Library voluntarily participated in this survey. A questionnaire was administered to the targeted group to gather information on library usage. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical method.

The questionnaire inquired about their biographic data, whether they used the school library in their GCE/AL class or not, how often and for what purposes they used the library, the reasons for not using the library (if they did not use), and the other sources of information they used to find information for their studies. The study also inquired on their use of e-mail and social media and whether they would like to communicate with the library digitally. Data was analyzed using SPSS 16 version. The questionnaire was distributed among the 706 registered B A students at the Main Library, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The study findings indicated that the all the BA new entrants registered at the Main library have used the library prior to joining the University. This it is shown in Table: 01 and response rate is 100%. The data shows us all the new entrants have basic experience in library usage.

Table- 1: Basic Information of BA Undergraduates

Basic Information of BA Undergraduates	Responses		Total	Response rate
	Male	Female		
Gender	164	542	706	100%
Used the School Library			706	100%

The statistics shown in Table: 02 indicate that 89% of students have borrowed books, 78% students have used the library for as studying purposes. This shows a positive attitude towards the library user habit. A consequence of the study shows that the 47% of students were consulting the library catalogue to find the books. It is revealed that they have basic knowledge in using of library catalogue and it was revealed that the students have the ability to use the library collection. 78% of students have used the library for study purposes, 32% borrowed magazines and 89% of students have borrowed books, these figures showing the sources of information they have used. The findings also highlighted that the teachers have instructed the students on how to use the library. Total of 98% students have responded to this question. It also revealed that the teachers

as mentors have advised and guided them to use the library. The percentage of the computer facilities available at the library is very low as only 28% of students had the computers at their school. It was also shown that 15% of students have used computers. The study revealed that the students have not had more opportunities to use the computers at their school library.

Table- 2: Use of School Library

Use of School Library	Number responses	Response Rate (Percentage)
Borrowed Books	625	89%
Borrowed Magazines	226	32%
Studied in the library	550	78%
Had a Catalogue	374	53%
Used the catalogue	333	47%
Had Computers in the library	196	28%
Used the library Computers	109	15%
Teachers asked to read	694	98%

With regard to a question asked on barrier in using the school library, more than 88% of students have stated that they had no serious difficulties in using the school library (Table-03). Only 12% of students have mentioned some barriers which they face at the school age. Only 2% of students have mentioned that they were not interested in using the school library and 4% of students have indicated that, there was no time for them to go to the library.

Table-3: Barriers to use the School Library

Barriers to use the School Library	Number responses	Response Rate (%)
There was no library in my school	4	1%
The school library did not have the books which I wanted to read	23	3%
There was no time for me to go to the library	27	4%
The library was closed when I was free to go	5	1%
I did not like the library staff, therefore I did not use the school library	4	1%
I did not like the library environment, therefore I did not use the school library	4	1%
I did not know how to get books from the library, therefore I did not use the school library	1	0
No one asked me to use the school library	2	0
I was not interested in using the school library	13	2%
Total	**83**	**12%**

5.0 Conclusions

The study revealed that the new entrants of the Bachelors of Arts of the University of Peradeniya registered at the Main library, have basic skills of library use. The study revealed that more than 80% have borrowed library books, 78% used the library for studying purposes and it revealed that they are satisfied with their experience in library usage. The study suggests that more self directed training be provided. Awareness programmes should be organized to improve their information searching skills, and the University library should attract the students by ensuring that current information resources are made available. Awareness on   the new library technologies and services to new entrants should also be given. Such information should be incorporated in to the curriculum of the first year to final year syllabuses. The students would there   be able maximize their use of the library and also acquire the necessary skills.

6.0 Recommendations

The study is recommends that to improve the library usage by undergraduates of the Bachelor of Arts new entrants the following action should be taken:

The university library should conduct more attractive awareness programs for the users to make maximum usage of existing library facilities and can make use of their previous experience of library usage.User education is the most important role for these new entrants and it must be incorporated in to the curriculum of the first year to final year syllabuses.

It is suggested that the library should have up-to-date collections and in various subjects to fulfill the needs of the users and to encourage them to visit the library and use it.
It also suggests that the library should make a more user friendly and attractive library environment for user satisfaction.

Library should be encouraged to set up freely accessible institutional repositories and various databases to search full text articles and other publications subject to copyright restrictions.

The library staff should be skilled enough to assist the users when they face any problem in accessing library collections and its services.

It also suggests that the Faculty should be given more attention to encouraging the students to use the library. There should have mechanism to use the library resources to their assignments.

References

ADEYEKE, W. B. A. (1977) The need for user education in secondary school libraries. *Library Review,* Vol. 46 No. 8, 586-592.

BIKOS, G. Papadimitriou, P. and Giannakopoulos, G.A. (2014) School libraries impact of secondary education: a users' study. *Library Review,* Vol.63 No.6/7, 519-530.

MIZRACHI, D. (2010) Undergraduates' academic information and library behaviors: preliminary results. *Reference Services Review,* Vol.38 No. 4, 571-580.

JIAO, Q. G. (1997) Prevalence and reasons for university library usage. *Library Review* Vol. 46 No. 6, 411-420.